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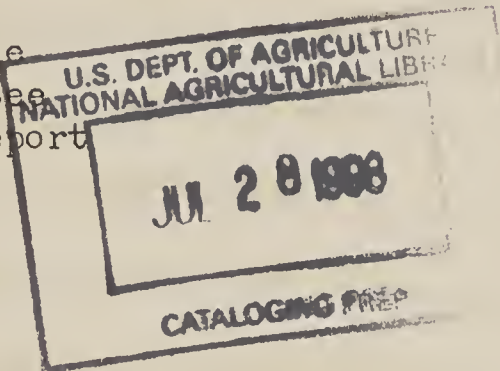
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Washington, D. C.

July 22, 1940

Comments and Suggestions of the  
Interbureau Coordinating Committee  
Concerning the Unified Program Report  
Kent County, Maryland

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A committee representing various agencies in the Department of Agriculture has reviewed the progress report submitted by the Kent County Land-Use Planning Committee. A number of comments and suggestions concurred in by the committee are included in this statement with the hope that they may be helpful to those who are participating or aiding in the work of developing a unified agricultural program for Kent County.

The work done thus far should prove to be a sound starting point for the more comprehensive long-time program which the committee contemplates. Effective planning, of course, is a continuous process from which the beneficial results accumulate from year to year. From the introductory statements, it is evident that the county committee realizes that its work so far constitutes but a first step, although a most important one, in the development of a program requiring continuous study and adaptation.

The county committee also recognizes the need for further effort in obtaining active representation of the various interests and groups within the county--geographic, social, economic, racial, etc.--and in securing the most effective participation of technicians and local administrators. Well balanced representation is fundamental in planning for the general welfare and is being secured in most counties through

the use, by the county land-use planning committee, of representative community committees or subcommittees who are able to deal more intimately and in greater detail with the problems affecting individuals or groups within the localized areas. Although the Kent County Report does not indicate clearly the extent of farmer participation in the planning work, the objective of full representation is one that all planning committees are striving toward. (Refer to County Planning Series No. 2.)

While the report indicates that there are acute land tenure problems in the county, it is not entirely clear as to the recommendations made or action contemplated. Emphasis is given to the point that the present leasing system is seriously disadvantageous to landlords and operates to prevent needed land-use adjustments. As one method of improving this situation, it is recommended that "very careful attention should be devoted to arranging leases that are more equitable and would make farm ownership more attractive to tenants". This seems to imply that leasing arrangements should be made less desirable to tenants in order that they would want to become farm owners. The conditions cited tending to hinder the progress of the Tenant Purchase Program, namely, the best prospects are better off as tenants than as owners, and the difficulty of finding farms for sale at their appraisal value, indicate the difficulties and problems involved in encouraging farm ownership as a solution. Also, they indicate a real need for further study and analysis of the landlord-tenant situation.

Stability of tenure of operating farmers and an understanding between owners and tenants as to the security of tenure of the operator, whether he be a tenant or mortgagor, is a principal contributing factor



in rural community stability and is one of the goals of land-use planning committees. In this respect, Kent County appears to compare very favorably with most other agricultural counties. The appointment of a subcommittee on tenure, to work under the general direction of the county committee, which could devote its time to making a rather detailed survey and study of the whole tenure problem would appear to be very helpful to the county committee in making further recommendations. Perhaps the subcommittee, with the help of technicians from Extension Service, the State Experiment Station, or the Department of Agriculture, might correlate existing data and work and continue to make a systematic analysis of the customary provisions of lease arrangements commonly used, particularly on those farms where tenants and landlords have maintained mutually satisfactory relationships over a period of years, and from their findings make recommendations as to equitable rental terms for various types of farms.

The Department of Agriculture will soon have available for distribution some revised lease forms and related educational materials on land tenure and leasing arrangements that should be useful to farmers, the county committee, and agency officials in considering the tenure problem.

Tax delinquency and insolvency do not seem to constitute a serious problem in Kent County although "excessive general property taxation" was listed as one of the problems needing attention, and the further statement is made that real estate carries more than its fair share of the tax load. Many of the problems in taxation cannot be attacked directly on a county or community basis because of the need for

legislative action and authority; however, it undoubtedly would facilitate consideration of such matters by the State Land-Use Planning Committee and by the Legislature if local groups would continue to collect data, formulate statements of their findings, and, as soon as feasible, make suggestions for adjustment.

The problem of securing better understanding of the use of credit and more satisfactory utilization of the existing credit facilities, while not specifically planned for action in the 1940 program, is one that the committee undoubtedly is considering seriously and laying the groundwork for future recommended action. Careful examination of the credit needs of low-income families, particularly part-time farmers and those bordering on relief status, would seem to offer excellent opportunities for obtaining worthwhile results from the planning work in Kent County. The living conditions and real income of many families on small acreages might be materially improved through the supervision and small rehabilitation loans for productive units and income-producing goods offered by the Farm Security Administration. The use of grant funds to supplement FSA loans, emphasis on live-at-home programs, and cooperative ownership of certain equipment in many cases make it possible for a family on a small unit to develop resources and productive units sufficient to become self-sustaining. The relatively small percentage of farmers being reached by the Farm Security Administration through this type of assistance indicates that the fullest use of that agency is not being made; likewise, it appears that relatively small use is being made of production credit loans from the Farm Credit Administration. An analysis of the causes of land-mortgage delinquency and study of the



organization and management of the farms operated by delinquent Federal Land Bank borrowers might furnish leads as to some of the corrective adjustment needed.

Referring to the plans of the committee to bring together in mimeographed form for distribution materials on sources and kinds of credit available, attention should be called to information now available in printed or mimeographed form from the Farm Credit Administration and the Farm Security Administration.

Interest on the part of the committee in improving educational facilities suggests the advisability of appointing a subcommittee to make a special survey of the school situation, including present facilities, numbers of children in the various land-use areas by age groups, present school costs and estimated costs of needed improvements, best location for any future expansion of school facilities, tax monies available and necessary to be raised, etc. Local school officers and teachers and the State Board of Education should be able to assist the committee on these problems.

Improvement or development of public recreational facilities is a problem that could well be taken up by community groups for survey of local needs, available sites, costs, and plans for supervision and management. Since much of the desirable waterfront property is being, and probably will continue to be, purchased by individuals for private use, the committee might well study the feasibility of recommending that some public agency, such as the county or State, acquire or obtain control of a minimum amount of this property looking toward the establishment of public parks which will be available to all the people in Kent

County. Some examination might be made of the possibility of cooperation with State and national authorities interested in the development of game and wildlife refuges in selecting, acquiring, and planning for the management of areas which could be used in part for public recreational purposes. Encouragement might well be given to the inclusion of objectives on recreation in the programs of various groups as parent-teacher associations, farm organizations, homemakers councils, schools, 4-H clubs, and civic and business men's clubs.

Desirable progress has been made by the land-use planning committee in coordinating the efforts of the various agricultural agencies with respect to farm and home management plans. Only by reference to the recommendations for unified action in the development of individual farm plans by agency representatives, and by close cooperation in agreeing upon practices and procedures to be emphasized in their work with individual farmers, can a unified and well-directed attack be made on ~~land~~-use problems.

By working in closest possible cooperation, the planning committee and the agricultural conservation committee can obtain the maximum application of the agricultural conservation program on the practices that will contribute most to permanent conservation and needed land-use adjustments. Emphasis on adjustments which can be obtained under the provisions of existing program bulletins, if they were fully utilized by farmers, ordinarily will be most effective in producing immediate results, since action can be taken at once to effect them without the delays necessitated in obtaining additional administrative or legislative authorizations. If, however, the planning groups, after working



closely with the administrative agencies concerned, have become fully convinced by careful analysis of local conditions, that the desired long-time adjustments cannot be accomplished within the present framework of existing programs, they should give consideration to the program changes or developments which seem to them to be essential, and make recommendations accordingly. Planning committees usually have found it most helpful immediately to emphasize and encourage the use of adjustment practices which are most needed and which are least likely to be performed without the help given farmers by the agricultural conservation program and to solicit the cooperation of the various agencies in assisting farmers to include these practices in their farm plans.

Generally speaking, county and State AAA officials have authority to select from a wide range of practices included in the National Agricultural Conservation Program those which tend to encourage and obtain higher standards of human, soil, and water conservation. On individual farms county agricultural conservation committees have wide latitude in approving other than routine farm practices needed on the farm to conserve fertility and prevent erosion. Recommendations for lowering standards for soil-building practice payments by reducing either the quantity or quality of conservation practices should be made reluctantly and only after very complete consideration of the effects of such action on the amount of conservation accomplished.

With a basic organization for soil conservation work already established in the form of the Kent County Soil Conservation District, it appears that major problems are to improve and extend its facilities and services and obtain increased participation by farmers. The proposed

plans for concerted educational work by the committee and all agencies should result in greatly increased farmer interest. The District provides farmers an excellent means of taking an active part in planning and carrying out adjustments for better land use, and it is very essential that the work plans developed by the district supervisors and the work plans and farm plans of all agencies be closely integrated. Tenant purchase borrowers and other borrowers of Farm Security Administration and Farm Credit Administration, insofar as possible, should be tied in as district cooperators with participating agreements developed as a definite part of farm and home management plans.

A plan for making contacts with multiple unit landowners, or agencies having control over lands, to explain the benefits obtained through the soil conservation work and to secure their cooperation may be effective in advancing the work of the soil conservation district. Consideration might be given to the cooperative purchase and use of essential drainage or terracing equipment by farmers through loans from Farm Security Administration, the Baltimore Bank for Cooperatives, or other sources. Short training schools or demonstrations might be arranged by Extension or SCS engineers or through the National Youth Administration to train selected older rural youth in relatively simple skills involved in running contour lines, staking, etc., who can then render this service to farmers under the general supervision of technicians.

With 31 percent of the land in need of drainage, continued emphasis on planning and action to this end likely will be important. The permanent maintenance of ditches probably will be one of the most difficult angles. Although responsibility for maintenance after the in-



stallations are made will rest on the farmers involved with assistance from the supervisors of the Kent County Soil Conservation District, the help and cooperation of the county planning committee will be of great importance in developing effective plans for construction and future maintenance.

The departmental committee wishes to encourage the county land-use planning committee to give further consideration to developing unified plans with reference to forestry objectives. Proper forest land management is an important element in proper land use in most areas, and, as indicated on pages 19 and 20 of the report, the committee recognizes that the problem of improving the output and condition of woodlands is an important factor in making desirable adjustments in Kent County. By setting up forestry goals to the end that farmers produce timber to supply their needs for fuel, fence posts, cheap building materials, etc., and comparing these with the present ability of farm woodland resources to supply this volume of wood, the nature and scope of the remedial measures needed will be more apparent. It is suggested that a sub-committee on forestry might render valuable assistance to the county committee through close cooperation with the forest technicians of State and federal agencies in developing objectives to be included in work plans and in planning educational and demonstrational work which the county committee believes to be essential.

The county committee's request that a new soil survey be made in Kent County should be taken up with the State Agricultural Experiment Station, since this research is conducted cooperatively by the State Agricultural Experiment Station and the Division of Soil Survey, Bureau of Plant Industry.

The problem of marketing and distribution has been recognized by the county committee as one needing further consideration and planning. The comparatively high participation by farmers in cooperative buying and selling indicates that Kent County farmers are interested in marketing and distribution problems and would welcome suggestions and plans for improving this phase of their farming business. The Division of Marketing and Transportation Research of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the Baltimore Bank for Cooperatives, and the Cooperative Research and Service Division of the Farm Credit Administration have expressed willingness to be of service to the committee through consultation or assistance in undertaking studies of marketing facilities and problems.

The planning committee has indicated the need for further study and analysis of a number of problems having deep social significance and affecting the welfare of considerable numbers of the population of the county, many of whom are not immediately concerned with soil conservation practices. Planning for the welfare of all of the people often has social implications which, if not taken into account, will markedly hinder, if not nullify, progress. The following points may suggest studies in this connection that may be made by committees and technicians that will be of assistance to the planning committee:

Farm labor requirements in county--number, type, season of year, length of employment.

Farm labor available--type, capability.

Will average annual earnings support laborer's family?

Is demand for labor well distributed over year?

Do farm labor incomes or living conditions vary with operator income?



Is unreliability of farm labor the principal contributing factor in farm mechanization?

What are the needs for and what can be done to assist some rural youth to establish themselves in farming?

What opportunities are offered for rural youth who do not want to become farm operators or laborers?

Importance of the entail system on present social and economic patterns and problems involved in changing to some other practice.

What are the present population trends in Kent County?  
What do they signify as to land use there?

Does the county afford opportunity for all present farm families to make a living?

What opportunities can be developed to provide for any families displaced through retiring "unproductive" and "unprofitable" land?

Is there a relationship between housing conditions provided and dependability of farm labor?

What is the relation between type of farm enterprises on individual farms and "adequacy of unit"?

The Kent County Land-Use Planning Committee and the State Land-Use Planning Committee are to be commended for the fine progress that has been made thus far in developing a unified agricultural program. Land-use plans and action policies must be formulated in the light of the best available information and through understanding of the basic problems and interests involved. The departmental committee is confident that the work in Kent County will be continued on this basis.

The Department of Agriculture and its field representatives are anxious to give as much assistance as possible to all persons and groups engaged in developing and applying a unified agricultural program in keeping with sound democratic processes. However, a major problem

facing all planning committees is that of developing ways and means of increasing local initiative and responsibility for conservation work and for securing effective action and participation by farmers and local groups.



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